



Testimony of ConnCAN
Subira Gordon, Executive Director
Education Committee Public Hearing
February 22, 2023

Testimony Regarding: HB6662 & HB6663

Co-Chairs Senator McCrory and Representative Currey, and distinguished members of the Education Committee, my name is Subira Gordon and I am the Executive Director for ConnCAN, a statewide education advocacy organization focused on equitable solutions for our kids.

Today, I'm here in support of HB6663 and in opposition to section 1 of HB6662.

Regarding HB6663: An Act Establishing the English Learners' Bill of Rights

This past year, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) released its first report in three years. Their findings were extremely troubling, especially for Connecticut English Learners.

- In 4th grade reading, **only 8% of English Learners are at or above proficient**, compared to 10% nationally
- In 8th grade reading, **only 2% of English Learners are at or above proficient**, compared to 5% nationally
- In 4th grade math, **only 11% of English Learners are at or above proficient**, compared to 14% nationally
- In 8th grade math, **only 3% of English Learners are at or above proficient**, compared to 4% nationally

This is clearly unacceptable.

So how do we begin to fix these issues? Student-centered funding, through HB5003, is a must, and so is this legislation. By codifying an EL Bill of Rights, Connecticut families can meaningfully engage with their child's school, build deep and lasting relationships, and ensure a universal minimum criteria for translation and language justice.

I'd like to thank the Governor's office for making this bill a priority this session, and to Rep. Felipe and Rep. Candelaria, as well as many co-sponsors, for championing this work.

To strengthen the bill, we would like to see two additional points added.

First, English Learners are distributed throughout the state, and some live in communities without any other English Learners. If the school or district is unable to provide the necessary services for that child, they should have access to another school or district that fits their needs. By adding in this protection, English Learners have access to the support they need to learn at or above grade level.

Second, the process for recourse should be strengthened over time. This means that parents, many of whom have tried for years to get the translation services they require, can file a formal complaint with the State Department of Education, should a school or district not live up to their end of the bargain. That way, there's quality control throughout the process.

This bill is a terrific first step in helping English Learners thrive in Connecticut. Thank you so much for the effort and commitment to this issue. We look forward to working with you to make this bill become a reality for over 48,000 English Learners in Connecticut.

Regarding HB6662

Section 1 of this bill pauses the planned roll out of the charter school weights. This goes against our collective goal of simplifying, streamlining, and making Connecticut's education funding system more equitable. Instead of continuing to treat school types differently, the Governor's office should integrate HB5003, the student-centered funding model, into its decision making for 2023 and beyond.

By pausing the weighted phase-in for charter schools, the state continues a dangerous trend of treating some children differently than others, even if their needs are the same. This is not justifiable from an ethical or moral standpoint and must change for Connecticut students to thrive.

We look forward to working with the Governor's office and key leaders to strengthen Connecticut's education funding system in a manner that recognizes this moment as pivotal for our future. HB6662 falls short.

Thank you.